

Sisters ministry distributes 20 million free books

By Bill Bartlett
Correspondent

The 1687 Foundation based in Sisters has completed the consolidation of its activities at a new 16,000 sq. ft. location in Sun Ranch Business Park. The unmistakable, two-story building, developed by Art Blumenkron dominates the park's growing list of occupants.

Registered as a 501(c)(3) charity in Plano, Texas, the Foundation has from its inception made Sisters the base of its principal mission: providing books of hope and encouragement to the incarcerated, first responders, and the military.

The Foundation was established as a direct result of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombings and the founders' desire to reach the hurting. What started with a few boxes of donated books has now grown exponentially with over 20 million books given away at zero charge. The Foundation is self-funding and does not accept donations.

Books for prisoners is the largest channel for its Christian outreach. Other recipients include food banks, homeless shelters, and soup kitchens. Even shipping is free. There are more than 30 titles available, hard and soft cover, including seven for children, three of which are bilingual — English and Spanish — plus three coloring books.

With few exceptions the books are from other publishers, such as the highly popular "Karla Faye Tucker Set Free: Life and Faith on Death Row," published by Penguin Random House. It was Random House who acquired struggling Sisters-based Multnomah Publishing

in 2006. Many readers will remember Multnomah Publishing who had some 65 employees at the time housed in the building opposite the Post Office now occupied by Metabolic Maintenance.

Renee Akaka manages the Book Ministry Division for the 1687 Foundation. She came to the Foundation in 2006 from Multnomah following its move to Colorado Springs. Akaka is on the board of the Foundation and is a vice president. The founders, a married couple (the husband is now deceased) are highly protective of their identity, preferring their works to speak for them. The very name and significance of 1687 is closely held by the publicity-shy Foundation, which lists assets of \$37 million in a recent IRS filing.

On the other hand, Akaka and her staff of five, all women, gladly welcome visitors to the new facility by appointment. "We would like to share our work and its impact with the community," Akaka said. Visitors will see a state-of-the-art warehousing operation. The pallet-racking system can handle 760 pallets, each holding an average



PHOTO BY BILL BARTLETT

The 1687 Foundation supports a variety of charitable outreach operations, including books for prisoners, a horse therapy ranch, and a retreat center.

of 2,100 books. When full, the warehouse can hold more than 1.5 million copies. The day *The Nugget* visited about 500,000 books were in storage.

By comparison the entire Deschutes County Library system houses 255,000 copies. Because books have a higher degree of risk from fire, the building's fire sprinkler system incorporates a sub-suppressant system within the rack bays as well.

A fully automated postage-addressing system and automatic pallet wrapper are among the technical features that make it possible to ship about 1 million books a year.

Prior to the new Sun Ranch facility, the Sisters footprint for the 1687 Foundation consisted only of an office on North Arrowleaf Trail. Storage and fulfillment of the books themselves was provided by a third party in the Midwest. Truckloads of

books have been transferred in the last three weeks to the new building with more on the way. The operation will now be fully integrated in Sisters, from title selection to distribution.

Beside its book operations, 1687 supports a number of charitable endeavors including a Texas ranch that offers horse therapy, a retreat center, and even a 22,000-square-foot classic car and baseball museum.

For all your summer project needs right here in Sisters!

Lumber • Hardware • Paint
Fencing & Decking • Doors & Windows

FREE Local Delivery!

HOYT'S HARDWARE & BUILDING SUPPLY, Inc.

Hours: M-F 8 to 5, Sat. 8 to 4, Closed Sundays
440 N. Pine St. • 541-549-8141 • www.hoyts.net

Gypsy Wind Clothing

Sizes Small to 3X
Comfortable, Affordable,
Everyday Clothing

183 E. Hood Ave.
OPEN MON. - SAT., 10 AM - 4 PM • SUN., 1 - 4 PM

You Did It!

The Class of 2021 Banner Project Team offers Warmest Congratulations to All Our Local Students.

We Especially Salute Our New Hometown Graduates!

You made it through a tough year and you have a whole community supporting and believing in you!

SPECIAL THANKS go to banner project volunteers, including dedicated Sisters High School staff & parents and the Sisters Public Works crew...

Another BIG THANK YOU goes to the many donors—including residents, businesses & organizations—who made the project possible...

Your generosity shows how much Sisters Country cares.
We are grateful for YOU!

The keepsake banners can be picked up at SHS until June 18 or when school resumes in the fall.
For more about the banner project, see citizens4community.com.

Photo courtesy of Jerry Baldock/outlawphotography.net